





## Petitions! Petitions!!

The American Anti-Slavery Society has issued a large edition of the following circular, with the annexed petitions, copies of which will be sent to every town in the free States where an Abolitionist can be found who will circulate them for signatures.

Office of the American Anti-Slavery Society, 1537, New-York.

DEAR Sir, Attached are copies of several petitions, which this Society is anxious to have immediately and thoroughly circulated in your town and vicinity.

The right of petition is one of the most sacred rights enjoyed by man. When lost, there is little left in civil government which is valuable. In this country, that right is now jeopardized,—yes, well nigh destroyed. The time to exercise it is the most effectually when it is endangered. The people should rally round it NOW, as the only means of preserving it from annihilation.

1. Petitions to Congress. Number 1 relates to the District of Columbia. That is now a new question. As it shall be decided, so will be the fate of liberty in this nation.

No. 2 relates to the Territories. The question in regard to them stands on the same basis with that of the District, as to the responsibilities of northern citizens.

No. 3, concerning the slave-trade between the States, occupies high ground. Congress has declared the traffic in men on the high seas and on the coast of Africa, piracy. Is it less piratical in America?

No. 4 is intended to meet the expected application of Florida, for admission to the Union, as a slave State. Petitions remonstrating against this, should be ready in season, as they may not be taken by surprise, as in the case of Arkansas.

No. 5, relating to TEXAS, is of extreme importance. If that immense slaveholding territory, large enough for six or eight States as big as Kentucky, is annexed to the Union, it will probably involve us in a war with Mexico, (if not with foreign powers),—will open a large slave market, and thus give a new spring to slavery in the old States,—will give the slaveholding interest, a fearful preponderance in the nation,—will enable the South to trample freedom of speech and of the press, the right of petition and locomotion, the right of organization, and even of prayer for the slaves, under foot, by law, and by constitution, so that they may soon have the power and they will lack the inclination? To alter our United States Constitution to their wishes. And, would the North submit to this? We fear the Union will be dissolved, if Texas is annexed to it.

No. 6 also relates to Texas. The reason we send two kinds of petitions concerning Texas, is that some persons, either here or there, did not know all the facts stated in it, or for some other reason, might be unwilling to sign the long petition (No. 5), but might be willing to sign the short one (No. 6). Of course the same person ought not to sign both.

2. Petitions to State Legislatures. Number 7 asks these bodies to declare by resolutions, that Congress possesses power to abolish slavery, and the slave trade, in the District of Columbia, &c. &c. (see petition), and that it ought to exercise that power immediately. Such a declaration, at this juncture, would have immense influence upon Congress, and upon the public generally. It also shows these bodies to insist upon their rights, and to show their Representatives, on all these topics, (see petition). This will greatly encourage the members of Congress. They will feel sustained and impelled onward by it, in their struggle to maintain our rights. Too much importance, we think, cannot be attached to this petition.

No. 8 prays for the repeal of laws which make distinctions among citizens, on account of color. This applies to the anti-republican and unchristian statutes of Ohio, New-York, &c. &c. There is scarcely a State, where such laws do not disgrace the statute book. If there be any such State, this petition need not be circulated there.

No. 9 relates to a trial by jury for persons committed as fugitive slaves. Such a trial is demanded by the plainest principles of justice, and by the U. S. Constitution. It has recently been granted in New Jersey and Massachusetts. From these facts, we may be encouraged to ask for it in other States. In Massachusetts and New Jersey it need not be circulated, of course.

No. 10 is intended to urge our State Legislatures to take the same ground in regard to Florida, which they did pending the 'Missouri question,' in regard to that State.

No. 11 is concerning the annexation of Texas. This ought to be signed by every friend of God and man.

III. Suggestions and Hints. 1. We must rely upon you to see that this work is done in your town.

2. You, with the other friends of liberty and mercy, must make sacrifices, if necessary, to circulate these petitions. We know it will cost time, trouble, and perhaps money; but, if we remember that we are doing good, and that with them, it will be a delightful service. We must not forget that Congress has denied the right of the slave to petition for mercy;—therefore, we should be the more eager to petition in his behalf. It is noble to speak for the dumb. The present extreme pecuniary pressure, renders it impossible to send out as many lectures to convert men to our principles, as we had contemplated;—therefore, we must make the most of our abolitionism, by bringing it all into use. Every man and woman must be an agent.

3. We beseech you to commence obtaining names 'immediately,' and to canvass your town thoroughly. Leave not a person unvisited. Hereafter, the work has been commenced too late, and we can do very little more.

4. If each one will do his duty, we can lay 500,000 names on the tables of Congress, at its next session. That body is more powerfully moved by large numbers, than by strong arguments. Let them be thoroughly pined.

5. Do not say, 'It will do no good—they are incorrigible.' We are not to be discouraged. Good has been done. The discussions in Congress and in our State Legislatures have greatly promoted our righteous cause. We point with exultation to the noble action in the Legislatures of Vermont and Massachusetts, as proofs that legislative bodies are not immovable. It is good policy to do the very best we can, and then leave the rest to God. Acting on this rule, we should forthwith National and State Legislatures with memorials. Our best friends in Congress urge us to petition. A noble band will stand by our rights at the next session.

6. The petition to Congress concerning Texas should be ready for presentation at the opening of the Extra Session, on the first Monday of September next.

7. We have brought forward the different topics in separate petitions, because some might be willing to petition for one or more objects, who might not be willing to petition for all. We suggest, that all the petitions should be circulated at the same time. This will be an economy of labor; and, generally, those who would sign one, would sign all.

8. We earnestly hope you will see that all the towns in your county are supplied with blank petitions. If they are not, we trust you will draft and send copies of the annex to some suitable persons in each town, who will circulate them, with the request that they will then return them to you. For this service, the slave has no other one to rely upon but yourself.

9. The signing of these petitions will not be confined to Abolitionists. All who hate slavery, and love the cause of mercy, and would preserve our free institutions, should put their names to them, without regard to their views of abolitionism. It should be a movement of THE PEOPLE. Abolitionists are not alone interested—the interests of ALL are involved. This consideration should be emphatically urged.

IV. Small but necessary matters.—1. Cut the petitions apart, and paste each one at the top of a half sheet of paper.

2. Fill the first blank, in the body of the petition, with the words, 'citizens,' or 'inhabitants,' or 'legal voters,' or 'women,' &c. &c. as the case may require.

3. Fill the second blank, in the body of the petition, with the name of the city or town, if to a State Legislature; with the name of the city or town, if to Congress. The proper method of filling the third blank is obvious.

4. Names should be signed only on one side of the paper. Paste on, till it is long enough.

5. Let every one write his own name. Names should not be copied on—it might lead to a suspicion that they were not signed.

6. If you wish to circulate the petitions in different towns, or in different parts of the same town,

at the same time, copy off the petitions, and circulate.

7. Males and females can both sign the same petition, if necessary. If women wish to sign petitions separate from the men, some female can copy off the petitions, and circulate—otherwise, they are requested to sign the same petition; but in that case, the name should be kept in separate columns.

8. If males under twenty-one years old, and females under sixteen sign, their ages should be put down opposite their names.

9. When the petitions are completed, they can be forwarded from each town to Congress, by mail, (while that body is in session), directed to some member, accompanied by a letter. There is no postage to be paid by any one. Petitions of any size may be sent to a member of Congress, postage free. Letters to go free must not weigh over two ounces.

All petitions, except those in regard to Texas, we now think, should not be forwarded to Congress, until the regular meeting in December next. New circumstances, yet to happen, may render it necessary to send them on earlier. The Texas petitions should be before that body at its opening, in September. It might be well to hand them to your member of Congress before he starts for Washington.

Arrangements may be made in some sections, to have all the petitions from county pasted together, and sent in one roll. This may be desirable, in those cases where it is perfectly convenient, and where it will cause no delay.

9. Petitions to State Legislatures should be forwarded to some member of those bodies, accompanied by a letter, in season, as they may not be taken by surprise, as in the case of Arkansas.

10. The names on each petition to Congress, and to the State Legislatures, should be counted, and the number put in figures at the top, before it is forwarded. This is important.

11. If any information is wished, on any of the above topics, please direct a letter by mail to HENRY B. STANFORD, No. 143 Nassau-street, New-York, or to the American Anti-Slavery Society, 1537, New-York.

12. If the individual to whom this is addressed cannot, on account of some Providential hindrance, immediately attend to it, we trust he or she will give it to some one who will attend to it without delay. Important matters, requiring such prompt attention, ought not to be neglected.

I. To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States.

The undersigned, of in the State of , Respectfully pray your honorable body, immediately to abolish slavery, and the slave trade, in the District of Columbia.

II. To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States.

The undersigned, of in the State of , Respectfully pray your honorable body, immediately to abolish slavery, and the slave trade, in those Territories of the United States where they exist.

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## THE L. BERATOR.

## COMMUNICATIONS.

## SLAVERY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

It has been held by the Supreme Court of Massachusetts, in its recent decision upon the subject, that slavery was abolished by the Constitution of this State. The bill of rights, which makes a part of this Constitution, contains this provision, viz: 'All men are born free and equal, and have certain natural, essential, and unalienable rights; among which may be reckoned the right of enjoying and defending their lives and liberties; &c. This language has been considered sufficiently strong and explicit to abolish slavery in Massachusetts, without any law to be passed for this purpose. Now it seems to me, the language used in the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States, if not as strong and explicit as that used in our State Constitution, is sufficiently so to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, without any law to be passed by Congress; and that if the question were brought before the Supreme Court of the United States, they would be bound so to declare. The language used in the preamble is as follows:—

'We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution.'

Now, here are certain great objects, which it is said to be the object of this instrument to obtain, among which are 'to establish justice,' and 'secure the blessings of liberty.' It is said, the declaration is made in the name of 'the people of the United States,' for ourselves and our posterity;—and therefore, it may be said, was intended to be restricted in its application to the people who framed the Constitution, and their posterity, viz: the white population of the United States. But, though this may be the letter of the preamble, I think it cannot be the spirit of it; but that the general principle was intended to be asserted, that the object of this instrument was 'to establish justice,' and 'secure the blessings of liberty' to all over whom the national government has a jurisdiction as such, and who do not come under the operation of the State governments. It is true, there are certain provisions in the national Constitution, which were intended to recognize slavery in some of the States, as an existing institution in them, and which make certain negotiations of the non-slaveholding States during the continuance of this institution; but these provisions relate only to slavery as it exists under the State governments, and subject to their State Constitutions, and can be considered as recognizing it only to this extent. They have no application to slavery, as existing within that portion of the United States not subject to the jurisdiction of the national government, as to the operation of the State governments. The District of Columbia is in this situation in relation to the national government. It is solely within its jurisdiction, and no State Constitution has any authority over it. Congress have, by the Constitution of the United States, 'exclusive jurisdiction over such district.' There being, then, no Constitution having particular reference to the District of Columbia, Congress is bound, in legislating for it, to be governed by the great principles of liberty, justice and humanity, which lie at the foundation of all rights;—a government, which the people of the United States acknowledge to be imperative and paramount in their obligation, and which they have embodied in the instrument framed for the government of these United States. The spirit, therefore, of the Preamble to the Constitution, should govern them in their legislation respecting the District of Columbia, as well as the United States at large—'to establish justice,' and 'secure the blessings of liberty'—and this, in reference to the colored population who have been held as slaves, as well as the white population. That slavery is a violation of 'justice,' and a privation of 'the blessings of liberty,' it would be wasting time to endeavor to show.

Such being the case, slavery was, I conceive, actually abolished in the District of Columbia, as soon as it was ceded to the United States, and the laws of Maryland and Virginia ceased to operate within it—and it became subject to the control of Congress, who are bound to look to the principles promulgated in the national constitution as their landmarks of power, and rules of duty. And that Congress, consistently with these principles, could no longer by any of these acts recognize slavery as still existing within the District, or make any laws for its continuance; but are bound to consider it as having been abolished by the spirit of the national Constitution, as the State of Massachusetts did by that of her own Bill of Rights.

W. S. A.

THE NEW ENGLAND ANTI-SLAVERY CONVENTION.

Assembled on Tuesday morning at nine o'clock, and was continued till six o'clock on Friday afternoon—a 'four days meeting' of the assembled friends of human freedom. We have had an interesting time. Friends present from every portion of New England, besides two evening meetings of two or three hours each, and you have the size of the picture before you, to begin with. Then look around and notice that the audience are composed of country farmers, village mechanics, and professional gentlemen, men of all creeds and of all political parties, white and colored, old and young, children and adults. A young man and woman, a youth, beauty, elegance, decrepitude age, abolitionists and their opponents, slaveholders and slaveholders' apologists, birth-right freemen and emancipated slaves. Here you have the materials—the figures for the grouping—the active elements of abolitionism—the raw materials from which the manufacturer of human freedom is going on. We find, now for the speakers. There ministers from their pulpits—ploughmen from their fields—lawyers from the bar—judges from the bench—fishermen from Marblehead—editors—manufacturers—operatives—merchants—clerks—physicians—smiths—artisans—the flower of our universities, and the flower of our common schools. We have, in our national councils, to the slaveholding interest, and will reduce to complete subjection, the interests of the free States, and especially, the interests of their free labor, which is the foundation of their wealth and prosperity. Such a result would probably lead to a dissolution of the Union,—an event we sincerely deplore.

VI. To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States.

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